THE ROGADINE WASP GENUS *BATOTHECA* (HYMENOPTERA, BRACONIDAE) NEW TO AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

The parasitic wasp genus *Batotheca* Enderlein (Hymenoptera: Braconidae: Rogadinae) is recorded from Australia for the first time.

The Australian braconid wasp fauna has been largely neglected until quite recently when an improved knowledge of generic and subfamily level taxonomy has led to a spate of descriptions of new taxa and the discovery of many genera and higher level taxa on the continent for the first time.

During sorting of the Braconidae accessions in the Natural History Museum, London, a female specimen of the highly distinctive braconid wasp genus *Batotheca* Enderlein (1905) was found which bears the following labels: "G'vale W.A.MCO 7.11.27", "Gordonvale Australia" and "Br 154". It is not clear whether W.A. refers to Western Australia or to its collector. However, it seems likely that it is the latter as there is a Gordonvale in northern Queensland which is an important historical collecting site for parasitic Hymenoptera.

Previously *Batotheca* was known to occur from India through Indo-China and the Philippines to Papua New Guinea. *Batotheca* was revised by Watanabe (1938, 1958) who recognised four species. However, all the species are morphologically extremely similar and differ primarily in coloration so the possibility that these represent just colour variants of a single species cannot be excluded at present. The Australian specimen reported here has a reddish head and mesosoma and a black and white metasoma making it appear to be either *B. beccarii* (Mantero) or *B. dohrniana* Enderlein. The characters given to separate these by Watanabe (1938) were based on the literature rather than on the examination of many specimens and they do not take into consideration the range of variation that can be observed in large collections of Indo-Australian specimens. It would be unwise therefore to assign the Australian specimen to a particular species at present.

Batotheca species are koinobiont endoparasitoids of limacodid moth caterpillars which they mummify prior to pupating internally (Austin 1987). Some species may be economically important in that their hosts are pests (Greve and Ismay 1969, Conway and Tay 1969, Austin 1987).

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